



FIJI NATIONAL  
UNIVERSITY

# FNU NIKUA



## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN CLIMATE CHANGE  
RESILIENCE

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HEALEY - ACADEMIC  
ON A MISSION

ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
MATTERS

FORGING AHEAD  
AT FNU

## Sustainable Development – the role of education in climate change resilience

FNU participates at the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers



As Fiji marked the 2nd anniversary of Monster Cyclone Winston on 20 February, Prime Minister Rear Admiral (Ret'd) Hon. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama reminded delegates attending the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CEEM) the time to act on Climate Change is now!

Speaking to representatives from 53 nations, Hon. Bainimarama said “none of us are safe until we meet the challenge posed by climate change. None of us are truly secure. And as a global community, we must do everything in our power to meet this challenge and resist all attempts to slow the process down. I want maximum ambition, maximum action and with maximum urgency.”

With the conference theme “Sustainability and Resilience: Can Education Deliver?” the tone of the conference was appropriately set and delegates participated in interactive discussions during the week broadly touching on topics on how education can be linked to making a more resilient future in the face of calamities.

The Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland in her statement said “The interlinkages between education and other areas of the Commonwealth’s work are extensive. Education has an enabling role that is unique. Quality education empowers women, girls and other marginalised groups, and protects against violence and other harmful practices. Early investment in education can support improved health outcomes and contribute to a reduction in poverty. Education imparts the knowledge, develops the skills, and values and attitudes that will equip Commonwealth citizens to lead sustainable lifestyles. This, in turn, will make us collectively more resilient, and enhance our combined ability to reduce or withstand global challenges, including climate change.”

The Fiji National University, led by Vice Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey featured prominently at the weeklong international event speaking in six of the conference sessions. Furthermore, the Fiji National University Students’ Association (FNUSA) also was very involved and

FNUSA President Ketan Lal was appointed as Pacific Representative to the Commonwealth Students’ Association Steering Committee to contribute to drafting the ‘Nadi Declaration’.

“One of our goals for this conference was to impress on education ministers the importance of funding both capacity building and post-disaster relief for universities in the small island states affected by climate change” said Professor Healey.

“Many of the Commonwealth’s 53 member states are island nations in the Pacific and the Caribbean, where climate change is leading to rising sea levels and coastal erosion, and intensifying cyclones and hurricanes. And in the meeting of the education ministers of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), two of our Deans (College of Humanities and Education, College of Engineering Science and Technology) successfully set out the case for funding a Commonwealth network to help build capacity in member universities affected by climate change.”

The Fiji National University always has played a pro-active role in working with affected communities following disasters or crisis. In the recent past, FNU assisted with supplies to the people of Vanuatu and through its College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, assisted with the deployment of medical personnel to Tuvalu after both nations were affected by Tropical Cyclone Pam.

**Following the aftermath of Cyclone Winston, the College of Engineering, Science and Technology assisted villagers in Namacu on Koro Island providing technical support in rebuilding ten houses.**

Guided by the University staff the villagers were able to gain basic hands-on knowledge on construction of safe structures.

Professor Healey said one of the vital takeaways from the CEEM was the importance of advance planning to deal with natural disasters, as well as managing the return to normal operations within a respectable period of time.

“Many of the delegates from the Caribbean reported the devastation wrought by hurricanes like Irma, which took out power, disabled communications and closed campuses for weeks. At the first FNU Senior Management Group meeting after the conference on Monday, we discussed at length our current emergency planning policy and

procedures and agreed to undertake a systematic review to ensure that we are following best practice and making ourselves, as a university community, as resilient as possible to future events,” said Prof Healey.

Such international conferences are important for raising the global profile of both Fiji and Fiji’s education system. The Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers also showcased Fiji’s ability to successfully organise a complex conference with over 400 delegates from across the Commonwealth’s 53 member countries.

Representatives of Fiji’s education system, and the Pacific Islands more generally, were key members of the organising committee from the outset. In terms of Fijian higher education, the Fiji Higher Education Committee, Fiji National University and the University of the South Pacific were very influential in shaping the conference programme.

“The key for Fiji National University is to seek opportunities for outbound staff and student mobility which are scholarship-funded, in contrast to most traditional exchange schemes where participants have to bear their own travel and accommodation costs. For FNU, these costs would be prohibitively high for most staff and students. The value of the Commonwealth and the Association of Commonwealth Universities in particular, is that they offer a huge number of fully-funded scholarships for our staff and students to take masters and doctoral degrees at other member universities. Our request to the Education Ministers was to increase scholarships for universities affected by climate change, to help us strengthen our emergency planning and develop our teaching and research to build greater community resilience. We were delighted to see this included in the ‘Nadi Declaration,’” VC Healey said.

The meeting also showed a spotlight on the importance of institutional readiness to withstand and respond to disaster, the relevance of the Commonwealth community in education through exchange of ideas, the need for South-South exchange through scholarships and Commonwealth Youth as a resource for its resilience.

Fiji is a small country, but through events like the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers, our voices can be heard on the world stage.

This event raised the profile of both Fiji and Fiji National University at a global level and highlighted the importance of sharing resources, expertise and best practice to support capacity-building in small island universities impacted by climate change.



Attorney-General and Minister for Education Hon Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum visits the Fiji National University booth at the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers.



Staff and students of College of Engineering, Science and Technology assisting villagers in the rehabilitation project on Koro Island.

## Healey – Academic on a Mission



An avid biker with a witty sense of humour, a person who loves to listen to live music while scripting a weekly message to staff, or shouting on the top of his voice while watching the flying Fijians rugby team or his home football side Leicester City in action may not be an ideal mix when one would picture the leader of one of the largest universities in the region – but Professor Nigel Healey, the Vice Chancellor of the Fiji National University is all of this and more.

The tall, athletic lean 6 foot one with grey whitish hair all suited up can be seen with his head stuck in front of his big Apple computer screen for a better part of the day or if he's not at his table then he would be attending meetings with members of the senior management team, government ministers or catching up with other staff. And in middle of this, Professor Healey would most definitely be interrupted by the sharp ring of telephone or cell phone which is mostly placed on the charger behind his executive chair.

Having served in the academia field all of his career and in senior positions across several continents, Professor Healey admits the role of Vice Chancellor at FNU would be fairly different when compared to other countries.

"The role of a VC in, say, the UK or New Zealand is very low profile. You are just the chief executive of one of many tertiary institutions and you are relatively invisible. In Fiji, FNU is the national university and the Vice Chancellor is a public figure. So regularly I have strangers stop me in the street or in a supermarket to give me advice or tell me what we are doing wrong. In the Fijian culture, people often take their grievances to the top, so I often receive calls or emails from disgruntled students, parents and government officials... which took a little getting used to," said Professor Healey.

The publicity either in the mainstream media or social media about the University's operations is also something which the VC is trying to get used to. Each week, the Vice Chancellor and the management team receive a report on the articles published across the media about FNU which he described as 'amazing and unheard of.'

"There is so much in terms of news that's happening in Fiji and we are always fortunate to feature prominently in the media which definitely assists us with our branding and marketing. I think that is quite fantastic given Fiji is a small country with three Universities and several other small tertiary education providers," he added.

But while publicity is positive, Professor Healey is fairly grounded and focused on the task at hand which is to create a University that offers quality study programmes, delivered by highly qualified staff and produces work-ready graduates. Since Professor Healey took office in August 2016, the institution has grown leaps and bounds in terms of curriculum development, restructure and realignment of staffing structures, development of infrastructure and future expansion plans of the university.

"I believe we all share a common vision for FNU. We are a dual-sector vocational university and we prepare our graduates for employment – as doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, mechanics, plumbers, carpenters, accountants and lawyers. Our 2017 enrolment slogan – "Get a Skill. Get a Job. Enrol @ FNU." sums it up perfectly. As the nation's university, everything we do in our teaching and research is aimed at supporting the economic and social development of Fiji."

"FNU's mission is to produce highly employable graduates and socially relevant research. It takes time to develop teaching programmes, upgrade staff qualifications and build new infrastructure. For example, we began redesigning our Bachelor of Engineering degrees to meet IPENZ (Washington Accord) accreditation in 2015. The new engineering honours programmes were not approved by Fiji Higher

Education Commission until the start of 2017 and the first graduates will not receive their degrees until the end of 2020. When we get IPENZ accreditation in 2021, it will be the end of a seven-year journey, but it will have been worth it to have a world-class engineering programme."

"Do I feel the weight of the country's expectations on my shoulders? Of course, but this weight is shared with all the staff at FNU, who are trying to improve the teaching, the learning resources, the ICT and the physical estate for the country's students."

The position of the Vice Chancellor at FNU is certainly not for the faint-hearted as there is a lot of energy and support that's required by the leader on a daily basis to overcome the challenges. Being placed in the spot light by tax payers more regularly than sunshine patches in the Suva weather, Professor Healey has become quite accustomed to dosing off fires. However, being away from his family, who are based in New Zealand poses a regular challenge.

"I miss my family hugely. I have four children in the UK and my wife and two youngest (teenage) boys are in Christchurch. My 17-year-old has severe learning difficulties and goes to a special school, otherwise they would be here with me in Suva. I talk to my family "face-to-face" by FaceTime or Skype several times a day and I fly down to Christchurch every third or fourth weekend. It's a lot of travelling for only 36 hours with the family, but it means we stay connected and I get a lot of writing and emails done on the six flights down and back."

"I handle stress by talking to my wife, who keeps me pretty grounded and she's the wisest person I know. I also exercise: it's hard to stay stressed about work at 12km/hour on a treadmill. At weekends, I try to take long walks and keep up with my research. The Chancellor and I often have a working breakfast on Saturday mornings and put the world to rights."

Professor Healey likes to keep things simple. He takes the odd break from his computer to have a brief chat with his office staff while helping himself to make a cup of tea. Often he may be spotted casually walking up to the cafeteria on Nasinu campus to purchase his favourite chicken sub. The VC believes it is important to ensure objectives are kept simple and in perspective at all times.

"Students are my source of inspiration. I was inspired to spend my life in tertiary education by the transformational effect that getting a diploma or degree has on a young person's life chances – better employment prospects, higher lifetime earnings, better health status. I also want to make things better for our staff. We spend most of our waking hours at work, and it is important that we feel safe, respected, fairly rewarded and supported to develop in our roles. We are surrounded by challenges, but I would rather try ten things to make things better and get one or two wrong, than turn my back and do nothing."

Having a distinguished academic career spanning more than four decades, Healey says applying for a position at FNU was always part of his personal goal. Having grown up in Australia and later spending time working in New Zealand, Professor Healey knew Fiji would be an ideal choice as he was already accustomed to the Pacific weather and culture.

"After five years in the Northern Hemisphere, I knew I wanted to be back in the South Pacific and take a job where I could make a positive difference to people's lives – both staff and students. It was clear that FNU had the potential to make a huge contribution to the social and economic development of the nation. Like most senior academics, it was a personal goal to eventually take a position as a vice chancellor so that I could give something back to society."

Like the secret to fine whisky is the correct way to age the blend, Professor Healey says FNU already has a proven track-record of producing graduates who have gone on to become leaders in their respective professions or national leaders. He says many of the programmes offered

by the University remains unmatched in the region, however, like driving in the Formula One Grand Prix, racing drivers and engineers continuously look at areas of improvement to ensure they remain at the top.

The education sector is continuously undergoing change the world over and Professor Healey says hard yards need to be made continuously to ensure the University and the study programmes it offers remains relevant and competitive.

"The mission of a university is to create and disseminate knowledge; that is, to research and teach. We have carried out a major reform of the undergraduate curriculum since mid-2016, restructuring our certificates, diplomas and degrees to standardise on semester-based delivery. In the process, we have redesigned all our programmes to improve the employability of our graduates. On the research front, we are refocusing our research on a few key themes that align with national policy priorities like combating NCDs and climate change."

"Universities are about people. We have overhauled our salaries to make us more competitive and we are redesigning our academic promotions, performance appraisals and staff development policies to focus on upgrading the qualifications and skills of our staff. We have also supported the development of the Fiji National University Student Association (FNUSA) and significantly expanded our repairs and maintenance and capital works programs to make our campuses and facilities fit for a national university. There is much more to do, and we don't always get everything right the first time, but we are getting there."

"Our core business is to supply the graduates the nation needs and it is entirely reasonable that people should hold us to account. At the same time, we need to recognise that we face constraints, like being able to hire qualified academic staff or build the necessary teaching facilities. Generally, we know what we need to do, and we are working hard to meet the nation's aspirations."

The Fiji National University this year has a capital budget spend of just over \$50 million which will see amongst many developments a fully-fledged state-of-the-art campus in Labasa. Professor Healey strongly believes FNU has the potential to stand beside the world's best institutions, and while there's no magic formula for success, ensuring that every task whether it be academic or operational related is undertaken and completed in keeping mind the interest of the students. For Professor Healey he doesn't have to look far for inspiration, but only to the gallant Fiji sevens team which won Gold at the Rio Olympics. Under the guidance of Englishman Ben Ryan (Ratu Peni Lataianara Raiyani), the team got their basics right from the get go and with only one goal in mind – which was to win gold for Fiji. Ben struggled with obstacles daily, however, with mental toughness, commitment and discipline the team rallied behind each other and with the hopes of a tiny nation and majority of the fans that watched the grand-final against the United Kingdom, they triumphed against all odds.

Little do people know that Ryan and Professor Healey attended the same Loughborough University in England. Ryan has proved his heroics in the world of sport and now Professor Healey is on the journey of transforming and bringing academic excellence to Fiji through the Fiji National University. This makes Professor Nigel Martin Healey an academic on a mission!

**"Students are my source of inspiration"**

## School of Nursing targets to curb chronic diseases and NCDs



Head of School – Nursing, Dr Alisi Vudiniabola (middle) with Chronic Care Model pilot trainers

### “One person every eight hours in Fiji has a limb amputated.”

A total of 791 limbs were amputated due to diabetes alone in 2016 according to Ministry of Health and Medical Services Health Information Unit. There are more deaths related to Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and its complications within our younger populations than ever before.

This was a clear indication that “it is no longer business as usual” at the Ministry of Health (MoH) and this called for a more aggressive, integrated and strategic approach to the management of NCD and chronic diseases.

The Pacific region in reality has become a world of apathy where developments and progress have also brought in its social ills and problems. The rate of NCDs and the return of those previously eradicated and controlled communicable diseases signify that many things are not right.

Health care providers including nurses are constantly being made to feel guilty for not doing enough for NCD and we all know that changes need to happen to reverse the current rates of various diseases as well as ensuring that the SDGs are achieved in the new millennium. Nurses in Fiji have an obligation to “put things right” in light of the current NCD disaster.

The School of Nursing at the Fiji National University is currently piloting the use of the Chronic Care Model as a framework to manage chronic diseases that are included in the NCD classification: namely Diabetes, Cardiovascular diseases including Hypertension and Respiratory disorders.

The change in the approach is related to the need to adequately address the rising number of NCDs in the country by bridging the gap between acute care and the management of chronic diseases. The pilot project also includes Tuberculosis in its list of diseases as the rates of this highly infectious chronic disease continue to threaten Fijian population.

Head of School of Nursing, Dr Alisi Vudiniabola said the year three course in the Bachelor of Nursing programme called “NCD management in the Pacific” was added to its Primary Health Care (PHC) suite of courses making the programme one of its kind in the Pacific as it prepares graduates to use the Chronic Care Model for the management of NCD within a Primary Health Care setting.

With the Ministry of Health’s support, the School is using the Ministry of Health facilities in the Suva Subdivision namely Nuffield Clinic, Valelevu Health Centre and Suva Health Office for the pilot project.

Ten lecturers and three Registered Nurses from the Ministry of Health are involved in this work which ends in April; and then for the next two years from 2018, the School’s Year III student nurses should be able to practice the use of the Chronic Care Model during their clinical rotation within the Suva subdivision.

During the course of their clinical learning and assessments, students should also become certified Smoking Cessation Coaches after completing online modules and sets of assessments.

Dr Vudiniabola said the group will help patients with disease like diabetes to learn and understand their condition and live successfully with it.

Dr Vudiniabola said the work involves motivating patients to persist in necessary therapies and interventions and helping them to achieve an ongoing, reasonable quality of life.

The primary aim of chronic disease management programme is to reduce fragmentation while at the same time improving health outcomes at an acceptable cost to the healthcare system.

She said effective medical care usually requires longer time spent between the patient and the health care provider.

Speaking at the launch of the project in October 2017, the National Advisor Non – Communicable Diseases, Dr Isimeli Tukana said he was hoping that gaps in disease management were identified through the project.

Dr Tukana said the statistics were alarming and a clear indication of how people’s lifestyles were transforming and there was a need to change their mind-sets.

“The statistics are very alarming but the solution is very simple — people need to change their lifestyle,” he said.

Dr Vudiniabola said the School realised the need to change and revitalise approaches to diseases based on best practice protocols by finding the best framework that works well with our people.

“Our history of health care has clearly shown how Nursing and Medical practice changed in response to the disease landscapes in the

Pacific especially in Fiji,” she said.

Before the implementation of the pilot project, the Lecturers and Registered Nurses from the Ministry of Health were trained and made proficient in the use of the model and in the management of chronic diseases which enables them to work independently as community clinical nurse specialist.

The Clinical Nurse Specialist in Primary Health care would work independently from the community nurses and would therefore, trial a new practice pathway for nurses in Fiji.

The use of the Chronic Care Model allows the nurse to lead the management of NCDs in Primary Health Care with a team of providers from nutrition/clinical dietitians, physical activity educators or physiotherapists, health promotion specialists or population health experts. The model also ensures that health promotion programmes in lifestyle health management are developed and delivered to the At-risk population, registered patients and their families.

The approach is focused on empowering clients with the right information, the right tools and skills for goal setting, choices and decision making so that they make an informed decision to manage their health and live an economically productive life.

An added advantage of the approach and the use of the Medtech software for nurses to enter their data and record of patient care lie in the ability to monitor and evaluate care and services provided by the many different health providers that are involved for each patient.

The School of Nursing is mindful of the great strides that the Ministry of Health has made through the Package of Essential NCD Interventions (PEN) model training coverage Fiji-wide and we are hoping that the Chronic Care Model of managing chronic diseases would complement the PEN model.

“At the School of Nursing, we are responsible for supporting our nursing colleagues in the health services to identify relevant strategies that appropriately address the current NCD problems.”

“We would like to be the Change that we want Fiji and the Pacific to see and become in relation to NCD by implementing the Chronic Care Management framework to ensure that NCDs are adequately addressed and our people are equally accountable for every action taken for their health and wellness,” Dr Vudiniabola said.



## WHAT'S ON

find out what's happening on your campus

### Debate Competition

Registrations are now open for Debate Competition. Round 1 will be Campus level with Round 2 being Inter Campus level Competition. Fabulous prizes up for grabs. Registrations close on Wednesday 7 March, 2018.

### Inter Campus Games

Registration for the 2018 Inter Campus Games is now open. The following sports are planned for this year: Rugby 15's, Rugby 7's, Soccer, Futsal, Netball, Volleyball, Basketball and Touch Rugby. Registration ends: Central – 28 February, 2018 | West – 15 June, 2018 | North – 15 June, 2018

### May Graduation

Application for graduation for May Graduation ceremony closes on Friday 16 March, 2018 before 4pm. All applications are to be submitted online. Late submissions will not be considered.

### FSMedSA Welcome Social

The FSMedSA Welcome Social is an annual event to welcome the Year 1 and returning students to the FSMedSA family. This year's theme is 'Alice in Wonderland' and it will be held at the ANZ Stadium Concourse area on Saturday 3 March from 7pm. Tickets are \$5. Tickets will be sold at the gates.



## Entrepreneurship MATTERS

### Fijiana rep aspires to inspire Fijians

While many know her from her famous voice on air, others recognise her as a member of the Fijiana Womens 15s rugby team.

But as she likes to put it, 'I am much more than just a big voice' and like many Fijians she is an ardent supporter of Fiji Rugby.

She is radio personality - Mere Moto!

Originally from Nakelo in Tailevu, Mere grew up playing rugby with her peers from made-up discarded paper taped into a ball or a dry coconut.

"I developed a passion for rugby from a very young age. It was something I grew up with. We hear about rugby every day, we see the young men playing rugby almost every afternoon and we watch it cheerfully cheering on our national heroes whenever they are representing our country on the international stage," said Ms Moto.

The passion never faded, but grew as she got older.

So much so that the Legend FM night show host tried out for the national team.

Qualifying for the women national rugby team was a dream come true for the young lass and she was determined to make a name for herself in the sport.

"When I first qualified to be part of the Fijiana squad, it was beyond my wildest dream and I enjoyed every moment with the team. I was able to live the dream and wouldn't trade the experience with anything."

With her career as a radio host going from strength to strength and her passion developing, Ms Moto then decided it was time to return to University for higher qualification.

"I was actually considering two options when I decided to return to university. I was debating whether to pursue journalism as it was my day job, or to go for Sports Science as sports is where my heart is," she said.

Ms Moto is presently pursuing a Certificate IV in Sports Science with the Fiji National University's College of Humanities & Education (CHE).

"When I visited FNU for consultation, I was encouraged to undertake Sports Science. And I'm glad of my choice to enroll into the programme

as it will direct me into the area I wish to go into."

The rugby fanatic is now part of the local Striders Rugby Club where she is involved with administration and consultation work.

"We handle all operations of the club. We are also involved in consultation work for young rugby fans and teams. We conduct rugby lessons and trainings for any interested participant and are hoping to expand in the years ahead."

Ms Moto as part of her programme curriculum is also undertaking Entrepreneurship Matters, a unit offered by College of Humanities and Education (CHE) through its School of Creative Arts that encourages students to venture into small business upon graduation.

"The new business class is an excellent unit and I enjoy it. We are taught business tactics, how to write business proposals, tools of strategising a marketing plan and how to ensure we incur profits," said Ms Moto.

With big dreams, Ms Moto is hoping the one year programme to be a success and she will be able to start her business soon.

"At the back of my mind, I know what I want to do and that is to go into rugby consultation with my current team and eventually register formally so we are recognised and maybe seek assistance from the government with grant especially now with a lot of initiatives in place including the Young Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES)."

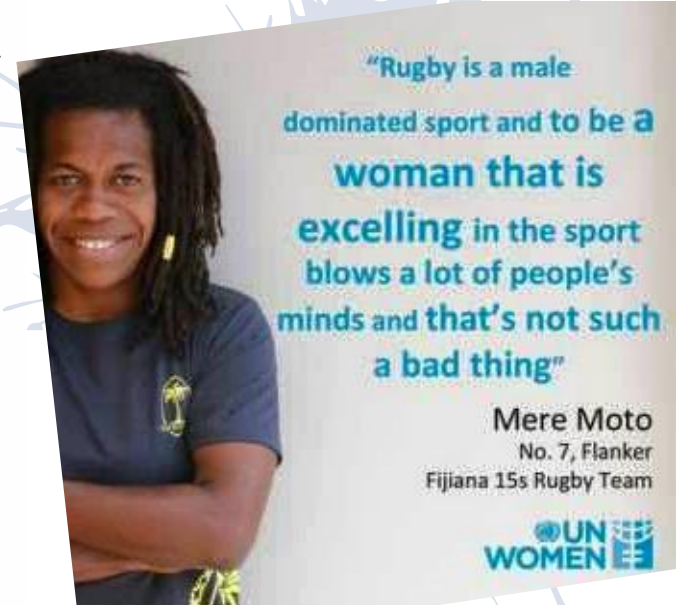
"There are a lot of things I wish I could do and with this programme my options seem endless. Especially as I'm doing what I enjoy and as people say if you do what you love you wouldn't have to work a day in your life. But all in all, I just want things that do well for me and at the same time help all Fijians."

Dean CHE, Dr Eci Nabalarua said the unit is specially designed to train students with the necessary skills to successfully operate small business after completing their fields of study.

"Entrepreneurship Matters will provide students the necessary tools to use their skills and knowledge to operate a small business. Through this programme we will also be fulfilling the government's call to provide training in job creation rather than job seeking and provide

opportunities for the emergence of young people in small businesses to help boost the economy band to develop a cohort of graduates who will be trained in both content and business skills," said Dr Nabalarua.

"This is a very exciting unit where students will not only learn how to go into business but also hear and learn from successful young small business entrepreneurs on their journey into what it take to establish a successful business. There are also field trips scheduled for students around Viti Levu which will allow students to interact with other successful Fijian entrepreneurs."



## Forging Ahead at FNU

### Accounting for our goals and objectives

Recently accountability in education has emerged into the public domain. This is underscored by Sustainable Development GOAL 4 (SDG4). The General Education Monitoring, or GEM, prepared by UNESCO (2017) recognised this as it sought to clarify, with some difficulty, what accountability means, to whom and for whom as well a credible mechanism to achieve results. Much like UNESCSO, the World Bank, within the broad dimensions of its neo-liberal development approach, and strategies, continue to underline education as 'one of the important drivers for ending poverty and boosting shared prosperity, as well as improving health, gender equality, peace and stability.' (2014). The Systems Approach to Better Education and Results or SABER was, as usual, developed by the Bank to assist countries assess their education capacity (2014)

Against the overarching backdrop of SGD 4 the recent Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers had a session on Accountability in Education at which varying points of view were offered but without consensus on any mechanism and process.

The GEM Report identified, as part of accountability in education, issues such as, providing Access for education, ensuring Quality of (Product) and providing an Enabling environment for students. These are issues that at FNU we are committed to, and working at, as the national university.

At FNU we are accountable to the people of the country, part of whose taxes come to us through government's generous allocation to produce a public (and quality) good, for national development.

Education at the end of the day is a process through which the next generation is made numerate and literate with added practical skills for society's development. The education factory, that is the institution, churns out different products. At FNU our products include (in the many programmes that we offer) certificate, diploma, degree including Masters and PHDs. Each of these provides requisite skills that can be put to use in government, the corporate world, schools and universities and, indeed, for the brave new ones, a shot at self-employment. It is through the extensive range of these programmes that we ensure access, which the government funds through the financial assistance

it provides.

Thus in collaboration with government we reach to the youth to make a choice to 'get a skill and get a job.'

Our pride, and indeed our brand is that we combine higher education and vocation/TVET programmes and courses that respond to, and address, the challenges and priorities of development. Our doctors and engineers, for example, have demonstrated this with post hurricane work with communities and our teachers are in the classrooms with the next generation.

Even the recently approved Social Science Programme, the first at FNU, has a vocational component; that is training students in the practical work of social science. That is to design research, undertake fieldwork to collect data, analysis the data with specific tools. Many people tend to overlook this vocational aspect of social science training.

The architecture of quality assurance and accountability that we have established at FNU is unprecedented. It has a vertical structure starting from the school upwards through the college, the Senate Programme Review Committee sometimes the Senior Management Group, then on to Senate and the Fiji High Education Commission and then to the Ministry of Education. At each stage of this vertical journey a programme and its authors including the Dean of the College are subjected to a robust an inquisitorial procedure of no amusement.

The defining characteristic of this accountability structure and process is its embracing of interests outside the University but with rightful stakes in what we 'produce.' These interests include, the private and the corporate sector; the public sector, statutory organisations, Civil Society organisations and other relevant national interests. It is these groups who are represented in the Industrial Advisory Committees with a task to vet, interrogate, recommend and approve any new Programme with its number of courses.

As social and sometimes profit-oriented interests they bring concerns of communities, including sometime families and investors as well government decision makers to what I call the Programme Quality negotiating dialogue. For those of us who have had the chance to engage with these committees the lessons have been learned.

Sometimes frustratingly.

Take for example the recent Social Science and Social Policy Programmes. The Industrial Advisory Committee was made up of civil society organisations, Public sector through the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation. The Ministry of Employment Industrial Relations and Productivity, The Fiji Police Force and the Correctional Services.

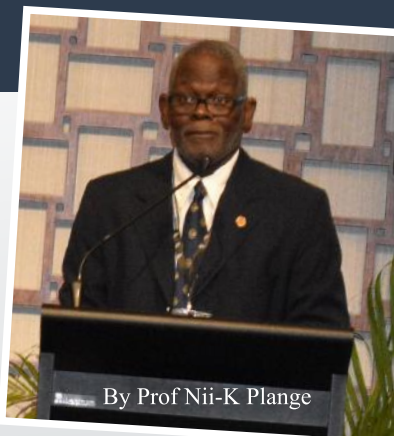
These are the final consumers of our products and therefore a stake in what we offer.

As academics we do fuss, complain and get frustrated with outside 'influence.' However, it is the way to go; indeed, the best way forward as a national university.

While fussing we also endeavour to ensure programme and course quality. Through incentivising our academic staff to undertake further studies for higher qualifications, do research and publish in ranked journals we sure to bring new knowledge and ideas to improve on course content and preparation of our students. Indeed, to date, quite a few of our junior academic staff are pursuing doctoral studies in many universities FNU included.

Students welfare and an environment that is conducive to academic work and training is also of utmost concern at FNU. To date this has occupied the discussions of the Senior Management group as it continues to explore pathways to improving the general conditions, both academic and residential, for students.

We are thus forging ahead with purpose and learning lessons. Our accountability mechanism and its process was quite a novelty to some at the conference; especially the spaces it provides for civil society and other organisations.



By Prof Nii-K Plange

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



**T**o progress in life it is understood that one has to make some level of sacrifice to attain their goal. For the soft spoken Roge Louis it means travelling a distance of 12,629 km from his homeland Haiti to Fiji Islands to pursue his Executive Masters in Business Administration (EMBA) at the Fiji National University.

The 31-year-old arrived in Fiji last May on the Education for Climate Change Adaptation & Mitigation (ECCAM) scholarship after being referred to by a colleague.

Louis is an Accountant by profession and after completing the EMBA programme, he wants to go back to his country and venture into teaching profession.

“When I applied for the scholarship I wasn’t sure if I would be considered. The selection process was fairly tough and when I was informed that I was selected I was over-joyed as well as a bit nervous,” said Louis.

“I had no idea where Fiji was. This Island is very far from my country and I had to Google Fiji to have a little background on how the environment will be here. So I researched more about Fiji to broaden my knowledge. From the internet I was able to get sufficient knowledge about the Fijian culture, climate and the economy. So that was a good start and it excited me about coming over to experience all this wonderful things and also study here at the same time.”

“Back in my country, we mostly communicate in French and very little in English. So I had to polish up on my English speaking skills and I think I’ve improved quite a bit since my time here in Fiji.”

Louis says his stay in Fiji so far has been a great self-learning experience.

Being away from home and overcoming the daily hurdles has molded him into an independent scholar.

“I have learnt more about myself in Fiji and how to tackle challenges in life. Nothing is impossible if you TRY.”

“Campus life is a different as you meet different people all the time. People’s behaviour, eating habits and life-style are all different so I had to learn to adjust and now I’ve become a like Fijian,” said Louis with a grin.

The friendliness and hospitality of the Fijian people has been the wow factor for Louis. He now is comfortable with uttering ‘Bula’ to a complete stranger while walking along the corridor to the library, something which he was uncomfortable with when he first arrived in Fiji.

“Fiji has a lot of friendly people who are easy to talk to. The openness of the people makes me feel comfortable to even share with them my troubles and it is easier to ask for their help whenever I need it.”

“Fiji has become one of my favorite countries in the world. The study environment at this University is easily adoptable for overseas students. The weather is fantastic. Most importantly, I feel safe in my surrounding.”

“I have made a lot of friends not only from Fiji but countries like Guyana, Papua New Guinea, and Solomon Islands.”

Louis spends his schools breaks exploring new places around Suva and as well as travelling around Viti Levu. Over the Christmas Holidays he took an around the island tour of Viti Levu and easily utters the names of each town he visited.

But amongst all the excitement, Louis does miss his family in Haiti. However, thanks to social media, communication with his family is easy.

“I miss home all the time as this is my first time to leave home for this long without my family. There is also no other student from my country studying at FNU so I always use the internet to be connected with my family back home.”

Louis is hoping to complete his EMBA by December.

## COPING WITH BACK TO SCHOOL STRESS

DR. MYRIELLE ALLEN  
CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRIST

**A**fter a long break, going back to school can bring mixed feelings to both parents and their children. By this time, parents would have already dealt with the stress of getting the kids enrolled, buying school supplies and uniforms. Now that schools have started, most parents have some sense of relief because the kids will be off to school and the house will be quieter; they would have more time to focus on their chores. For kids and students, it can be very exciting as it means a reunion with classmates and friends. For some, especially those starting in new schools, it can bring anxiety adjusting to the new environment, to new teachers, re-establishing routine from the summer break and keeping up with the demands of school like homework and projects. Other sources of stress may also include getting everyone up early, preparing meals and lunch boxes and beating the traffic!

Well, don’t worry too much. First of all, you are not alone and these anxieties are expected and normal. Many people are on the same boat (myself included). Here are some thoughts on how to cope with these stressful situations. I think that the key word to handling these is planning and getting organised ahead of time. Both parents and students may find these useful:

- To avoid the early morning strain of getting things and everyone ready, organise school or work bags, phones, keys, and lay out a set of uniforms including underwear, socks, ties and shoes for everyone BEFORE going to bed. This will avoid the stress of looking for them in the morning!

- Plan ahead for breakfast and school lunches. Salad vegetables could be washed, chopped and packed the night before and kept in the fridge. The same can be done for cold sandwiches and drinks. They can all go straight into lunch boxes

the next morning. Preparing sandwich fillings in the weekends are also a great help in saving preparation time.

- Having a pizza may be tempting, but opting for healthier snacks like fruits and nuts also help our immune systems build resistance against common illnesses.

- Find the time to engage in sports, walking or exercising. Being active helps our bodies produce “feel good” hormones called endorphins. They make us feel more energetic. Plus the interaction with people could improve our mood. Dancing to our favourite beats is another way of exercising. The time depends on what works for you, early morning or after school.

- Get organised by creating a checklist of things that need to be done. Use a calendar to keep track of due dates and deadlines. Having a checklist and a calendar keeps you better organised. It would be easier to prioritise tasks, to allocate and manage time wisely.

- Tidy up rooms or desks, and eliminate sources of distractions. This includes putting phones away, staying off social media and having the discipline or self-control to look at them only during relaxation time. This will assist in concentrating on tasks at hand.

- Before doing home works or projects, take a few minutes to unwind and calm the mind. Switch off electrical gadgets and take a power nap of 15 to 20 minutes to refresh and clear your minds.

- Apart from taking a power nap, listening to music is another way of calming the mind. Relaxing music is usually mellow and soothing

to the mind. Some find gospel or religious music not only calming but also spiritually enriching.

- During classes or when studying, there would be times when the mind wanders, and focus or concentration is lost. Sitting upright, gently stretching the back and taking a deep breath helps to re-focus one’s attention. When feasible or during class breaks, standing up, shaking the legs, and having a cup of tea or cold drink breaks the monotony.

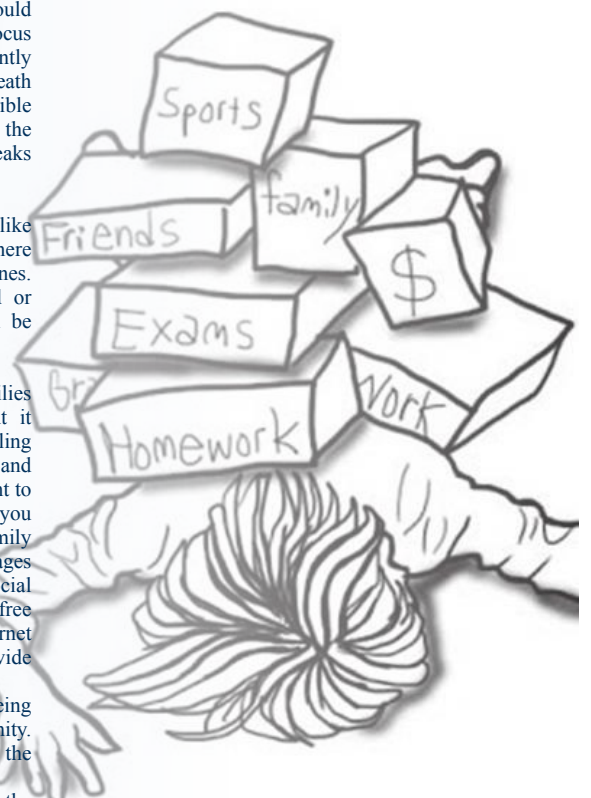
- Try brief meditation techniques, like mindfulness and deep breathing exercises. There are many free Apps available for smart phones. I would recommend using Smiling Mind or Stop, Breathe and Relax Apps. They can be downloaded for free!

Boarding school or living away from families could be a very positive experience. But it could also come with the challenge of feeling homesick. It is expected to miss family and friends when away from them. It is important to reach out and to talk to someone about how you feel. Better yet, try to keep in touch with family and friends by calling or sending text messages regularly. Fortunately, there are a few social media sites and free Apps that provide free video and voice calls for free with an internet connection. Joining student associations provide good social and peer support as well.

Cherish and enjoy the experience of being at school, many do not have this opportunity. Appreciate blessings big and small. Look at the bright side of things. Smile.

And, don’t forget to laugh. Laughter is the best medicine. It helps to increase oxygen and blood flow.

*When you laugh more, you learn more!*



## AGRICULTURE

# Farming for the Future



So far 87 students have successfully completed and graduated from the programme.

“We have some students who go on Industrial Attachment (IA) and soon after are able to start off their own farm even before they graduate, which really shows their enthusiasm. While some, who have graduated are now pursuing degree programmes,” said Mr Tabua.

Government offers assistance package of upto \$70,000 to graduates but they are to meet a few requirements to receive this funding.

“Last year, our first lot of eleven graduates received their packages from Government. To qualify for the Government grant, all graduates are to secure a land big enough to cater for their own farm. Government assistance will be in the way of land lease, equipment and seedlings.”

Mohammed Rasheed Iqbal, one of the lucky eleven students who received assistance from the government and launched his own farm.

Mr Iqbal secured 15 acres of land at Delaiwaitui, Vugalei in Tailevu with a lease offer of \$27,547.40

The young lad hopes to start his livestock farm once his business plan is approved by the iTaukei Land Trust Board (TLTB).

“I initially wanted to specialise in goat farming but now I wish to expand to sheep farming as well. There is high demand for livestock and I’m eager to start this project,” said Mr Iqbal.

Mr Iqbal is currently pursuing a Bachelor in Veterinary Science & Animal Husbandry while he awaits the green light.

**F**or a small island nation like Fiji with vast land resources, farming is an ideal source of income.

According to the United Nations Publication by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) in 2002, agriculture in Fiji is organised more along the commercial line.

Despite the huge income, farmers often encounter challenges that discourage further production that generate cash flow.

In 2013, the Fijian Government sort assistance from the Fiji National University (FNU) to design and offer a new Certificate III in Commercial Agriculture programme through the College of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (CAFF).

The certificate programme was initially targeted at school leavers who upon graduation would work on idle farming lands generating income and increasing employment. However due to growing demand, applications was opened to all youths.

The two-year programme is offered in two phases, the first year focuses more on theory based learning while the second covers hands-on training focusing on crop production, crop protection, soil fertility management, animal husbandry, agricultural machinery, equipment operations and agribusiness management.

Programme Co-ordinator and Head of Department for Entomology & Plant Protection, Mr Esava Tabua said there has been a significant interest from students who complete Year 12 and 13.

“Since its inception, the programme has gained popularity amongst the youths mainly because they are more empowered now into becoming entrepreneurs,” said Tabua.

Students can choose to study commercial farming from the following categories:

Crop farming includes production of cereal, solanaceous, brassica, bomilae, fruit trees, pulse & legume, root crop and vegetable farming.

Livestock production includes chicken meat & layer farming, duck, beef cattle, dairy, pig, sheep, goat and apiculture farming.

Aquaculture production includes shrimp farming, prawn and

aquaponics.

“From what we have noticed over the years, students are more drawn to root crop and vegetable farming. This may be due to the fact that production period is very fast it can take almost 6-7 weeks from cultivation to market sale. While livestock farming takes about 3-5 years to breed before it reaches market,” said Mr Tabua.



## MY SAY - Abdul Mufeez Shaheed

President FSMedSA

**T**he 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers was a unique conference. Despite having attended a lot of national and international conferences, CCEM was the first time that state Ministers of Education actually engaged with participants rather than the event being a photo op for all. As a student, I had the opportunity to meet with Ministers from various Commonwealth countries from Jamaica to Kenya to PNG. The conversation was about what they have in their country and what we had in ours and how we can try to put in best practices within our education system.

I was fortunate enough to have been part of the youth forums that were held during the conference. Meeting different university and national student leaders made me realise how common our concerns were with our education system despite the geographical distances and that we had a mutual goal of making sure that when we as students graduate, we are well equipped to not only be job seekers but job creators.

Youths were part of the integrated Partners Forum that was made of civil society, students and teachers who together discussed and came up with a recommendation to be given to education ministers to consider and put in as a commitment in the ‘Nadi Declaration’. These recommendations were inserted and governments pledged to work on them for the benefit of the Commonwealth. TVET and non-formal and informal education was emphasized. The need to contextualise education to different regions and communities was highlighted by our very own Pacific academics who talked about preservation of culture and traditions and incorporating those knowledge within our education system.



**G**rowing up in the Village of Tavua on Koro Island, I had big dreams. Being the first local Female Medical Consultant was not one of them.

For Sereima Bale, going to school and getting educated was a way of getting away because she wanted a better life and future than was on offer in the early 1950s for young girls growing up in a village setting.

When she was provided the platform to get education, she put her mind and heart to it and came out victorious.

Consultant Anaesthetist and Assistant Professor at the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Dr Sereima Bale's story is nothing short of inspirational.

Her father, whom she refers to as being visionary, decided that all his children should be educated.

He faced a lot of criticism and ridicule for actively pursuing advanced education for all his children (3 boys and 2 girls at the time). Educating girls at the time was perceived as a waste of time and effort.

"But being who he was, he persisted. I was in Class three when we relocated to Suva from Koro Island. There were seven of us, four boys and three girls," she said.

Her three older brothers went to a boarding school in Ovalau, her older sister enrolled as a boarder at Ballantine Methodist School while she stayed with relatives in Suva to attend school at Annesley Methodist Primary School.

Adjusting to life in Suva as an eight year old was difficult. Not only did she miss her family terribly but also her classmates and the village lifestyle. However, "it was much easier to prepare bread and butter sandwiches for school lunch than a billy-can of fish, bele and dalo which was, typically, normal lunch at the village school."

In 1958 she won a place at Adi Cakobau School (ACS) which, at the time, was a grooming ground for potential local women leaders.

"The initial excitement of getting into Adi Cakobau School very quickly wore off. It was a culture shock for me. I was 12 years old and suddenly I was on my own. Being in an all-girls school has its advantages. The senior girls helped nurture and mentor the younger ones as we try to adjust to the different aspects of growing up in a rigid but highly protective environment" she said.

"The school became a second home for me for seven years and some friendships forged there lasts to this day."

"It was at ACS that I developed a love for reading. Sundays were family visiting days; mine were back in Koro Island so I would spend this time in the school library lost in a world of fiction, literature and adventures"

She was very close to her father and remembers fondly the few times he was able to visit her at ACS.

"Every visit was just so special," she said.

### Getting into Fiji School of Medicine

Dr Bale says that Medicine was not her first career choice.

In those days the expected careers for girls were in teaching, nursing or secretaries.

At ACS, the main expectation was academic excellence and progression to tertiary education.

"We had a great English teacher who kindled my passion for English literature. Because of this teacher, I was motivated to become one myself."

Peer pressure led me to Medicine when my best friend decided to go to Nursing School and I decided to exit school at Form 5 to join two senior classmates who were applying for placements at the Fiji School of Medicine (FSM).

"I was accepted armed only with an A grade pass in Fiji Junior Certificate and the New Zealand Schools Certificate," she said.

"However, I immediately changed my mind and decided to return to school and complete secondary education to be eligible to study Medicine in a New Zealand university."

"When reapplying for a Government scholarship after passing the University Entrance Examination, I was rejected and was advised to study at the Fiji School of Medicine. Although this negative experience was a bitter pill to swallow at the time, I realised the valuable lesson this taught me in later years, as I progressed through my journey in various leadership roles as a Specialist Anaesthetist in the Medical profession; the many 'failures' I encountered actually served to strengthen my resolve in reaching my goals."

"My parents were extremely proud when they learnt that their daughter was going to be a doctor," she said.

### Medical training and practice

"Life at the medical school provided a different dimension to studying while simultaneously learning to be an adult. Managing time became crucial to success. However, like most medical students, I learnt this the hard way."

"It was hard work but it was worth it. We have come a long way. In my class, there were 26 students, two of whom were females. This works out at less than two per cent compared to the current intake where 70 per cent are women," she said.

She recalls that punctuality and professionalism in general was hugely important. If anyone came in late, they would not be allowed inside the classroom.

"Professionalism now has to be actively addressed and assessed. In our time it was a given. We were not perfect students by any means.

There were the usual brawls between the Samoan and Fijian students at the Nursing School dances. Thankfully this age-old rivalry is now confined to the rugby fields only".

Dr Bale said the low class numbers then meant more hands-on clinical learning and experience.

"With the large number these days, clinical teaching has become a real challenge."

Now that she has become an educator, she faces different challenges. "I have to get myself educated in technology to facilitate teaching. It comes natural to students. Technology has got its pros and cons. However with change, I have come to accept and appreciate its value in facilitating teaching and clinical training," she said.

Surgery and Anaesthesia have become much safer with advanced technology, readily available information through extensive medical research and regular practice audits.

"However, clinical expertise must continue to be developed and taught, particularly in our setting because technology can fail and, with inadequate biomedical service support, clinical experience of the diligent, empathetic doctor can always be relied on in the pursuit of safety and better patient care."

Dr Bale graduated with a Diploma in Surgery and Medicine (DSM) in 1969.

"After graduation, I was posted at Lautoka Hospital for internship along with two other females in my cohort because of accommodation issue. I really enjoyed working in Lautoka."

"As a medical intern a lot of my clinical learning was gained in Lautoka hospital. This was due to having one intern per discipline which gave us plenty of hands-on experience."

It was in Lautoka when she developed interest in Surgery and later Anaesthesia. Both fields were male-dominated at the time.

"During my internship, I applied to do Anaesthesia but, as expected, there was no acknowledgment because the choice to get into a specialty used to be the prerogative of the Ministry of Health (MoH). Six months later, I was asked to come to Suva for specialist training but by this time I had lost interest in Anaesthesia and was keen to continue in Obstetrics & Gynaecology (O&G), my last internship attachment."

"When I got to Suva I was given a letter directing me to train in Anaesthesia for six months and if not successful, I would be sent out for rural posting."

Forty-seven years later, Dr Bale is still actively involved in the specialty of Anaesthesia.

"Being a young female joining a department full of older male colleagues can be daunting. But, having the support of the British Consultant who encouraged me to join the specialty helped build my confidence enough to continue against so many odds"

### Achievements

In 1975, Dr Bale completed her Postgraduate Diploma in Anaesthesia in Manila Philippines through World Health Organisation (WHO)-supported programme for the Asia-Pacific region, through the University of Philippines.

Because she had already had 5 years' experience as an Anaesthetist, she was offered the chance to sit the first part of the Fellowship examination for Philippine Board of Anaesthesiologists (FPBA).

In 1980, she was invited back to complete Part 2 of the fellowship exam.

Unfortunately, this achievement did not translate to a change in professional status. "I remained a Senior Medical Officer for 11 years before being promoted to Consultant level in 1988."

The political upheaval in 1987 caused a massive disruption to medical services; Anaesthesia Department was decimated. "For three weeks, I was the sole Anaesthetist at the CWM hospital and kept the emergency services going until help arrived."

"For a young female specialist with family, the responsibilities and expectations can be overwhelming. Without family support, life situations can take its toll, and did, in my case."

With the help of British Consultant Anaesthetists, Dr Bale continued rebuilding the department capacity through local and expatriate recruitment drive.

Dr Bale said the Australian Society of Anaesthetists (ASA) and British Anaesthetists working in Fiji in 1989 helped form the Pacific Society of Anaesthetists (PSA).

"This Association has continued to strengthen, with support of subsequent Presidents of the ASA spanning over 3 decades.

"I served several 2-year terms as President of the PSA over the 29 years of its existence."

Dr Bale became a Consultant Anaesthetist in 1988, eight years after applying for specialist registration.

The registration was not processed until an expatriate surgeon joined the Fiji Medical Council as Specialist representative and instigated correction for this oversight.

At that time, more members of the department were expatriates and many of the local members were near retirement. There was a perceived lack of interest in the specialty.

This motivated her to support the call from the regional heads of health for a specialist training within the region.

With joint support of the Fiji Public Service Commission (PSC) and the ASA, Dr Stephen Kinnear was employed in 1986, specifically to develop Anaesthesia training based in Fiji for the Pacific region.

After 10 years as Head of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Unit at the



CWMH, she applied for the position of Senior Lecturer in Anaesthesia at the Fiji School of Medicine and replaced Dr Kinnear when he returned to Australia in 1998.

### Interests

Dr Bale has always been an active sports person from her school days (athletics & netball), medical school (hockey, table tennis, soft ball) and later, 'at age 40 and too old to continue playing other sports', she learnt to play golf.

Dr Bale represented Fiji in golf in two South Pacific Games; PNG in 1991 and Tahiti in 1995 and continues to enjoy playing the sport to this day.

She is currently a member of FASANOC Selection Justification Committee. "I have learnt many different aspects and challenges of the different national sporting organisations and appreciate the even more daunting tasks that administrators face in organising teams to represent Fiji in regional as well as international competitions".

Through her contribution as a clinical advisor to the DFAT-supported organisation, "Strengthening Specialised Clinical Services in the Pacific" (SSCIP) and her continuing involvement with the PSA, she has maintained her interest in the development of fellow medical fraternity in the Pacific.

### More recently

Dr Bale remains a full time staff at the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences at the age of 72.

"Being involved in undergraduate through to Postgraduate training gives me a sense of fulfillment in being given the opportunity to contribute to launching these young men and women in their careers. Every cohort I teach brings different challenges.

She enjoys physical activities & spending time with active grandchildren which help to keep her healthy.

Dr Bale has 3 surviving (of 4) children and eleven grandchildren of her own, plus an extended family of 5 amazing step-children who are all supportive of one another.

"I feel privileged to be part of this unique family," she said.

Even though she spent her entire working life in Fiji, she has developed extensive network with colleagues in the Pacific region, Australasia and many other countries through her involvement with PSA, ASA and the World Federation of Societies of Anesthesiologists (WFSA).

Like many of her school mates, Dr Bale left school in 1964 with big dreams, "eager to make a difference and change the world for the better".

"With commitment and perseverance, I think I have achieved some of these dreams and hope continue to help the younger generation of Anaesthetists achieve their big dreams".